Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (previously presented) A grinding machine for use in grinding materials, the grinding machine comprising:

a grinder assembly for receiving material therein;

at least one removable hopper removably positionable on the grinding assembly for dispensing material to the grinder assembly;

the removable hopper being positionable on the grinder assembly in a generally non-vertical direction;

a passage defined in the hopper being cooperatively placed in communication with the grinding assembly for dispensing material from the hopper to the grinder assembly;

a displaceable shutter carried on the hopper being positionable in an open position when the hopper is on the grinder assembly and being positionable in a closed position when the hopper is removed from the grinder assembly; and

a slide gate mechanism including a slide gate and a mover linked to the slide gate for controllably opening and closing passage of material from the hopper to the grinder assembly for grinding material therein.

2-3. (cancelled).

4. (currently amended) A method of selectively grinding food substances, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a grinder assembly;

providing a plurality of hoppers for retaining the food substance therein;

providing a passage in [[the]] each hopper for dispensing food substance from the hopper to the grinder assembly;

providing a shutter displaceably carried on [[the]] each hopper proximate the passage for covering the passage to prevent dispensing of food substance from the hopper when the hopper is removed from the grinder assembly;

providing an aperture in [[the]] each shutter that is alignable with the passage for dispensing food substance from the hopper when the hopper is positioned on the grinder assembly;

selectively placing one of the plurality of hoppers on the grinder assembly in a generally non-vertical orientation for dispensing food substance from the hopper for grinding;

selectively removing a hopper from the grinder assembly in a generally non-vertical orientation; and

selectively positioning one of the plurality of hoppers on the grinder assembly for dispensing of a different food substance therefrom along a continuously downward flow path to the grinder assembly for grinding.

5. (currently amended) A substance dispensing machine comprising:

a dispensing control unit for controllably dispensing a quantity of substance;

at least one substance retaining hopper for retaining a quantity of substance;

at least one wall of the hopper defining a cavity therein;

a passage defined in the hopper;

a shutter operatively carried on the hopper;

an aperture defined in the shutter for controllable alignment with and displacement away from the passage, alignment of the aperture and passage allowing substance to be dispensed from the hopper to the substance dispensing control unit;

the hopper being adapted for placement of the hopper on the substance dispensing control unit in a generally non-vertical orientation, and adapted for positioning the aperture in alignment with the passage to provide a continuous downward flow path from the hopper to the dispensing control unit and to provide a normally open condition with the hopper on the substance dispensing control unit; and

the hopper being adapted for removal of the hopper from the substance dispensing control unit in a generally non-vertical orientation[[,]] and for displacing of the shutter to move the aperture out of alignment with the passage for covering the passage with a portion of the shutter.

6. (currently amended) A method of positioning a hopper on a grinder and removing the hopper from the grinder, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a grinder ~~assembly~~ having an open top assembly;

providing at least one hopper for containing a food substance;

providing a shutter displaceably carried on the hopper to prevent dispensing of food substance from the hopper when the hopper is removed from the grinder;

providing an aperture in the shutter that is alignable with the passage for dispensing food substance from the hopper along a continuous downward flow path to the grinder when the hopper is placed on the grinder;

selectively positioning the hopper on the open top assembly by moving the hopper in a generally non-vertical orientation; and

selectively removing a hopper from the grinder in a non-vertical orientation.

7. (original) The method according to claim 6 further comprising the step of moving the hopper in a generally horizontal position to locate the hopper on the open top assembly of the grinder assembly.

8. (previously presented) A grinding machine for controllably dispensing and grinding coffee beans, the grinding machine comprising:

a grinder assembly;

at least one hopper for use with the grinder assembly;

an open top assembly on the grinder assembly for receiving the hopper thereon;

at least one wall of the hopper defining a cavity of the hopper;

a passage defined on the hopper for passing coffee beans retained in the cavity to the grinder assembly;

a shutter displaceably carried on the hopper proximate the passage;

the shutter being positionable in a closed position when the hopper is removed from the grinder assembly;

the shutter defining an aperture therethrough being displaceably alignable with the passage for dispensing coffee beans therethrough when the hopper is positioned on the grinder assembly to allow passage of coffee beans therethrough;

a magnetic assembly operatively associated with the shutter and the hopper for facilitating and retaining the shutter in a configuration with a portion of the shutter covering the passage when the hopper is removed from the grinder assembly.

9. (withdrawn) A method of providing information on a hopper for use with a grinder assembly, the method comprising:

providing a grinder assembly;

providing a hopper for dispensing substance to the grinder assembly;

providing on the hopper a component for retaining information;

providing on the grinder assembly a device for reading information from the component carried on the hopper;

reading information from the component by use of the reader on the grinder assembly; and

processing information from the component.

10. (withdrawn) A hopper for use with a grinder assembly, the hopper being displaceable on an open top assembly of a grinding assembly, at least one handle provided on a front face of the hopper for gripping when placing the hopper on the open top assembly in a non-vertical direction.

11. (previously presented) The grinding machine of claim 1 comprising:

a generally open top assembly on the grinder assembly for receiving the hopper thereon; and

at least one wall of the hopper defining a cavity of the hopper.

12. (previously presented) The grinding machine of claim 1 comprising

the shutter defining an aperture therethrough being displaceably alignable with the passage for dispensing material therethrough when the hopper is positioned on the grinder assembly to allow passage of coffee beans therethrough.

13. (previously presented) A grinding machine for use in grinding materials, the grinding machine comprising:

a grinder assembly for receiving material therein;

at least one removable hopper attachable proximate to the grinder assembly for dispensing material to the grinder assembly;

a passage defined in the hopper being cooperatively positionable in communication with the grinder assembly for dispensing material from the hopper to the grinder assembly;

a displaceable shutter carried on the hopper and being positionable in an open position when the hopper is placed on the grinder assembly and being positionable in a closed position when the hopper is removed from the grinder assembly; and

a slide gate mechanism carried on the grinder assembly including a slide gate and a mover linked to the slide gate for controllably opening and closing passage of material from the hopper to the grinder assembly for grinding material therein.

14. (previously presented) A grinding machine of claim 13, the grinder machine further comprising:

a component carried on the hopper for retaining information;

a reader provided on the grinder assembly positioned for reading information from the component carried on the hopper;

a controller receiving information from the component by use of the reader.

15. (previously presented) The grinding machine of claim 13 comprising:

a magnetic assembly operatively associated with the shutter and the hopper for facilitating and retaining the shutter in a configuration with a portion of the shutter covering the passage when the hopper is removed from the grinder assembly.

16. (previously presented) The grinding machine of claim 13 comprising:

a generally open top assembly on the grinder assembly for receiving the hopper thereon; and

at least one wall of the hopper defining a cavity of the hopper.

17. (previously presented) The grinding machine of claim 13, wherein:

the shutter defines an aperture therethrough being displaceably alignable with the passage for dispensing material therethrough when the hopper is positioned on the grinder assembly, the aperture of the shutter and the passage of the hopper being aligned to an open position to allow passage of coffee beans therethrough when the hopper is placed on the grinder.

18. (previously presented) A method of grinding material, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a grinder assembly;

providing at least one hopper;

providing a passage defined on the hopper for dispensing material therethrough;

providing a shutter on the hopper;

providing an aperture defined in the shutter;

positioning the hopper on the grinder assembly;

shifting the shutter from a closed position to an open position;

aligning the aperture with the passage when placing the hopper on the grinder assembly;

further comprising the steps of:

providing a slide gate mechanism on the grinder assembly; and

controllably operating the slide gate for opening and closing passage of material from the hopper to the grinder assembly for grinding material therein.

19. (previously presented) A method of grinding material according to claim 18, wherein the material to be ground is a food substance, the step of providing at least one hopper comprises providing a plurality of hoppers for retaining the food substance therein;

the step of providing a shutter on the hopper comprises providing a shutter displaceably attached to one of the hoppers proximate the passage for covering the passage to prevent dispensing of food substance from the hopper when the hopper is removed from the grinder assembly;

the step of providing an aperture defined in the shutter comprises providing an aperture in the shutter that is alignable with the passage for dispensing food substance from the hopper when the hopper is placed on the grinder assembly;

the method further comprising selectively placing one of the plurality of hoppers on the grinder assembly for dispensing food substance from the hopper for grinding;

selectively removing said one hopper from the grinder assembly; and

selectively placing another of the plurality of hoppers on the grinder assembly for dispensing of a different food substance therefrom to the grinder assembly for grinding.

20. (currently amended) A dispensing machine for dispensing beverage producing substances or food products comprising:

a dispensing control unit for controllably dispensing a quantity of substance;

at least one substance retaining hopper for retaining a quantity of substance;

at least one wall of the hopper defining a cavity therein;

a passage defined in the hopper;

a shutter operatively attached to the hopper;

an aperture defined in the shutter for alignment with and displacement away from the passage, alignment of the aperture and passage allowing substance to be dispensed from the hopper to the substance dispensing control unit;

wherein the hopper is arranged on the substance dispensing control unit so as to position the aperture in alignment with the passage to provide a normally open condition with the hopper on the substance dispensing control unit and to provide a continuous downward flow path from the hopper to the dispensing control unit;

wherein removal of the hopper from the substance dispensing control unit displaces the shutter to move the aperture out of alignment with the passage so as to cover the passage with a portion of the shutter;

a slide gate mechanism provided in the dispensing control unit;

wherein the slide gate is operable for opening and closing passage of material from the hopper to the substance dispensing control unit.

21. (previously presented) A method of positioning a hopper on a grinder and removing the hopper from the grinder, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a grinder assembly having an open top assembly;

providing a slide gate mechanism on the grinder assembly;

providing at least one hopper;

positioning the hopper on the open top assembly by moving the hopper in a non-vertical position;

positioning a passage defined in the hopper in communication with the grinder for dispensing material from the hopper to the grinder assembly;

positioning a displaceable shutter carried on the hopper in an open position when the hopper is positioned on the grinder and being positionable in a closed position when the hopper is removed from the grinder; and

controllably opening and closing the slide gate mechanism including a slide gate and a mover linked to the slide gate.

22. (previously presented) The method according to claim 21, further comprising the step of moving the hopper in a generally horizontal position to locate the hopper on the open top assembly of the grinder assembly.

23. (withdrawn) A method of providing information on a hopper for use with a grinder assembly, the method comprising:

providing a grinder assembly;

providing a hopper for dispensing substance to the grinder assembly;

further comprising the steps of:

providing on the hopper a component for storing information about the hopper contents;

providing on the grinder assembly a device for reading information from the component carried on the hopper;

reading information from the component carried on the hopper by use of the reader on the grinder assembly; and

processing information from the component carried on the hopper.

24. (withdrawn) A hopper for use with a grinder assembly, the hopper being displaceable on an open top assembly of a grinding assembly, at least one handle provided on a front face of the hopper for gripping when placing the hopper on the open to assembly in a non-vertical direction.

25. (new) The substance dispensing of claim 5 wherein the hopper is adapted to move in a generally horizontal direction for placement of the hopper on the substance dispensing control unit.